



## Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

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### Laws of Minnesota 2021 Accomplishment Plan

#### General Information

**Date:** 07/06/2021

**Project Title:** RIM Wetlands - Phase X

**Funds Recommended:** \$3,051,000

**Legislative Citation:** ML 2021, First Sp. Session, Ch. 1, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 4(c)

**Appropriation Language:** \$3,051,000 the first year is to the Board of Water and Soil Resources to acquire permanent conservation easements and to restore wetlands and native grassland habitat under Minnesota Statutes, section 103F.515. Of this amount, up to \$59,000 is for establishing a monitoring and enforcement fund as approved in the accomplishment plan and subject to Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subdivision 17. A list of permanent conservation easements must be provided as part of the final report.

#### Manager Information

**Manager's Name:** Sharon Doucette

**Title:** Easement Section Manager

**Organization:** BWSR

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#### Location Information

**County Location(s):**

**Eco regions in which work will take place:**

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Prairie
- Metro / Urban
- Southeast Forest

**Activity types:**

- Protect in Easement
- Restore

#### **Priority resources addressed by activity:**

- Wetlands
- Prairie

## **Narrative**

### **Abstract**

RIM Wetlands Phase X will protect and restore approximately 420 acres of previously drained wetlands and adjacent native grasslands on approximately 9 easements across the State to restore wetlands and associated uplands for habitat and associated benefits. The Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) will utilize the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) easement program in partnership with local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCDs). The program will continue utilizing a ranking and selection process and be implemented locally by SWCD staff. Previous phases of this project have protected and restored over 30,000 acres to date.

### **Design and Scope of Work**

Prairies once comprised nearly 20 million acres in Minnesota. Less than 1% of this native prairie remains. Minnesota has also lost an estimated 42% of its original 16 million acres of wetlands to drainage or fill activities. The loss of wetlands is most severe in the prairie regions of the state (approximately 90% loss).

The typical sites this program enrolls are drained and farmed wetlands and associated uplands that offer little habitat or ecological benefits in their current state. Through a combination of eligibility screening and a scoring and ranking process, the program evaluates applications and selects applications that provide the greatest habitat and environmental benefits after restoration and protection for enrollment in a BWSR RIM easement.

The RIM Wetlands program protects and restores wetlands and adjacent upland areas. Approximately 540 acres of wetlands and associated uplands will be restored and permanently protected on approximately 9 easements in this phase. These restored wetlands and grassland complexes will provide critical habitat for waterfowl and other wetland dependent wildlife species.

RIM Wetlands is a local-state partnership delivered by SWCDs and BWSR. BWSR staff provide program oversight and manage the easement acquisition process and restoration design. Local staff promote RIM easements, assist with easement processing and provide technical assistance and project management services.

### **How does the plan address habitats that have significant value for wildlife species of greatest conservation need, and/or threatened or endangered species, and list targeted species?**

Tomorrow's Habitat for the Rare and Wild (MN DNR) states "A statewide look at the species-habitat relationships show that prairies, rivers, and wetlands are the three habitats used by the most Species of Greatest Conservation Need." This proposal targets wetlands and prairies, two of the three most important habitats used by the Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). An expansion of wetland and prairie habitat through this program will alleviate pressure on those species that are most sensitive to habitat changes occurring on the landscape.

SGCN in the proposal areas include the Five-lined Skink, Two-spotted Skipper, Northern Pintail, American Black

Duck, Grasshopper Sparrow, Upland Sandpiper, Sedge Wren, Dickcissel, and Western Grebe. In addition to the SGCN, the threatened or endangered species targeted in this proposal include the Blanding's Turtle, Dakota Skipper, Poweshiek Skipperling, and Rusty Patched Bumble Bee.

Prairie wetlands are particularly important for migratory waterfowl. Although the North American pothole region contains only about 10% of the waterfowl nesting habitat on the continent, it produces 70% of all North American waterfowl. The extensive loss of Minnesota's prairie and wetland habitat has led to the decline of many wildlife and plant species. The RIM Wetlands program continues to restore this habitat and protect it through perpetual easements.

Diverse vegetation, access to water, and protection from pesticides are important to Minnesota's native pollinator species. BWSR's native vegetation guidelines and pollinator initiative demonstrate a commitment to protecting native pollinators. Complexes and corridors targeted through RIM Wetlands provide natural passageways for pollinators. Targeted pollinator species include the Monarch Butterfly and several solitary bee species.

**Describe how the plan uses science-based targeting that leverages or expands corridors and complexes, reduces fragmentation or protects areas identified in the MN County Biological Survey:**

Science-based considerations historically used by the RIM Wetlands program will continue to be used. Through a combination of targeted outreach, eligibility screening, and a scoring and ranking process, the RIM Wetlands program evaluates each application on its potential to restore wetland/upland functions and values to optimize wildlife habitat and provide other benefits, including water quality. Each site is evaluated on its benefits to the surrounding landscape, ability to build upon existing corridors and complexes, and site-specific features that highlight the benefits of selection for permanent protection and habitat and associated environmental benefits.

During the application process, a review of adjacent permanent habitat and easement size is conducted to determine a site's importance as a corridor or as an extension to existing habitat complexes. Other examples of the science-based targeting used include proximity to threatened and endangered species, contributing watershed area, proximity to DNR Protected Waters, and the USFWS Habitat and Population Evaluation Team's (HAPET) Wildlife Habitat Potential Model. The HAPET model is a consolidation of models representing an array of migratory birds that use the Minnesota Prairie Pothole Region for breeding or migration.

**Which two sections of the Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan are most applicable to this project?**

- H5 Restore land, wetlands and wetland-associated watersheds
- H7 Keep water on the landscape

**Which two other plans are addressed in this program?**

- Long Range Duck Recovery Plan
- Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework

## Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?

### Forest / Prairie Transition

- Protect, enhance, and restore wild rice wetlands, shallow lakes, wetland/grassland complexes, aspen parklands, and shoreland that provide critical habitat for game and nongame wildlife

### Metro / Urban

- Protect, enhance, and restore remnant native prairie, Big Woods forests, and oak savanna with an emphasis on areas with high biological diversity

### Prairie

- Protect, enhance, or restore existing wetland/upland complexes, or convert agricultural lands to new wetland/upland habitat complexes

### Southeast Forest

- Protect, enhance, and restore habitat for fish, game, and nongame wildlife in rivers, cold-water streams, and associated upland habitat

## Does this program include leveraged funding?

No

## Per MS 97A.056, Subd. 24, Please explain whether the request is supplanting or is a substitution for any previous funding that was not from a legacy fund and was used for the same purpose.

This funding request is not supplanting existing funding or a substitution for any previous funding.

## Non-OHF Appropriations

Year	Source	Amount
2008, 2011, 2012, 2014	Bonding	Over \$19 million
2009-2012	Federal Wetlands Reserve Program	Approximately \$47 million

## How will you sustain and/or maintain this work after the Outdoor Heritage Funds are expended?

BWSR is responsible for monitoring and enforcement of RIM easements. BWSR partners with local SWCDs to carry out oversight, monitoring and inspection of conservation easements. Easements are inspected every year for the first five years beginning the year after the easement is recorded. Thereafter, on-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years. SWCDs document findings and report to BWSR on each site inspection conducted. A non-compliance procedure is implemented when potential violations are identified.

Perpetual monitoring and enforcement costs have been calculated at \$6,500 per easement. This value is based on using local SWCD staff for monitoring and existing enforcement authorities. The amount listed for Easement Stewardship includes costs of SWCD regular monitoring, BWSR oversight and any enforcement necessary.

## Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2021-Ongoing	Stewardship Account	Inspection every year	Corrective actions on	Enforcement action

		for the first 5 years; then every 3rd year	any violations	taken by MN Attorney General office
2021-Ongoing	Landowner Responsibility	Maintain compliance with easement terms	-	-

## Activity Details

### Requirements

**If funded, this program will meet all applicable criteria set forth in MS 97A.056?**

Yes

**Is the land you plan to acquire (easement) free of any other permanent protection?**

Yes

**Who will manage the easement?**

The easements secured under this project will be managed as part of the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) RIM Reserve Program. Easements are monitored annually for each of the first 5 years and then every 3rd year. BWSR, in cooperation with Soil and Water Conservation Districts, implements a stewardship process to track, monitor quality and assure compliance with easement terms. Under the terms of the Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) Easement program, landowners are required to maintain compliance with the easement. A conservation plan is developed with the landowner and maintained as part of the easement. Basic easement compliance costs are borne by the landowner, periodic enhancements may be cost shared from a variety of sources.

**Who will be the easement holder?**

The easements secured under this project will be managed as part of the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) RIM Reserve Program. Easements are monitored annually for each of the first 5 years and then every 3rd year. BWSR, in cooperation with Soil and Water Conservation Districts, implements a stewardship process to track, monitor quality and assure compliance with easement terms. Under the terms of the Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) Easement program, landowners are required to maintain compliance with the easement. A conservation plan is developed with the landowner and maintained as part of the easement. Basic easement compliance costs are borne by the landowner, periodic enhancements may be cost shared from a variety of sources.

**What is the anticipated number of easements (range is fine) you plan to accomplish with this appropriation?**

9

**Will restoration and enhancement work follow best management practices including MS 84.973 Pollinator Habitat Program?**

Yes

**Is the restoration and enhancement activity on permanently protected land per 97A.056, Subd 13(f), tribal lands, and/or public waters per MS 103G.005, Subd. 15?**

Yes

**Where does the activity take place?**

- Other : RIM Perpetual Easements

## Land Use

**Will there be planting of any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program?**

Yes

**Explain what will be planted:**

In certain circumstances, wildlife food plots are an allowable use on RIM easements as part of an approved Conservation Plan. Food plots on narrow buffers, steep slopes and wet areas are not allowed. RIM policy limits food plots to 10% of the total easement area or 5 acres, whichever is smaller. There is no cost share for establishment of food plots and upon termination the landowners must re-establish vegetation as prescribed in the Conservation Plan at their expense. Food plots are infrequently used by landowners, to date less than 3% of RIM easements have food plots.

**Will the eased land be open for public use?**

No

**Are there currently trails or roads on any of the proposed acquisitions?**

Yes

**Describe the types of trails or roads and the allowable uses:**

Existing trails and roads are identified during the easement acquisition process and are often excluded from the easement area if they serve no purpose to easement maintenance, monitoring or enforcement. Some roads and trails, such as agricultural field accesses, are allowed to remain.

**Will the trails or roads remain and uses continue to be allowed after OHF acquisition?**

Yes

**How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished?**

Under the terms of the RIM Easement, landowners are required to maintain compliance with the easement. Easements are monitored annually by SWCDs in cooperation with BWSR for the first five years and then every third year after easement acquisition to assure compliance with easement terms.

A conservation plan is developed with the landowner and maintained as part of each easement. Basic easement compliance costs are borne by the landowner, periodic enhancements may be cost shared from a variety of sources.

**Will new trails or roads be developed or improved as a result of the OHF acquisition?**

Yes

**Describe the types of trails or roads and the allowable uses:**

Though uncommon, new trails could be developed if they contribute to easement maintenance or benefit the easement site (e.g. fire breaks, berm maintenance). Unauthorized trails are in violation of the easement.

**How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished?**

The easements secured under this project will be managed as part of BWSR's RIM Reserve Program that has over 7,000 easements currently in place. Easements are monitored annually for each of the first five years and then every third year after that. BWSR, in cooperation with SWCDs, implement a stewardship process to track, monitor quality and assure compliance with easement terms.

Under the terms of the Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) Easement Program, landowners are required to maintain compliance with the easement. A conservation plan is developed with the landowner and

maintained as part of each easement. Basic easement compliance costs are borne by the landowner, periodic enhancements may be cost shared from a variety of sources.

**Will the acquired parcels be restored or enhanced within this appropriation?**

Yes

Vegetative restoration is planned to occur and these restoration costs are included in the easement acquisition amount.

**Will the land that you acquire (fee or easement) be restored or enhanced within this program's funding and availability?**

Yes

**Timeline**

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Obtain applications from eligible landowners	June 30, 2023
Easements recorded	June 30, 2025
Restorations complete	June 30, 2029

**Date of Final Report Submission:** 11/01/2026

## Budget

*Budget reallocations up to 10% do not require an amendment to the Accomplishment Plan.*

### Totals

Item	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$302,800	-	-	\$302,800
Contracts	\$32,400	-	-	\$32,400
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$2,611,200	-	-	\$2,611,200
Easement Stewardship	\$59,000	-	-	\$59,000
Travel	\$5,300	-	-	\$5,300
Professional Services	-	-	-	-
Direct Support Services	\$30,400	-	-	\$30,400
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	\$7,600	-	-	\$7,600
Supplies/Materials	\$2,300	-	-	\$2,300
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$3,051,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$3,051,000</b>

### Personnel

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Eco/Engineering	0.25	3.0	\$74,000	-	-	\$74,000
Program Management	0.25	4.0	\$120,000	-	-	\$120,000
Easement Processing	0.25	3.0	\$108,800	-	-	\$108,800

**Amount of Request:** \$3,051,000

**Amount of Leverage:** -

**Leverage as a percent of the Request:** 0.0%

**DSS + Personnel:** \$333,200

**As a % of the total request:** 10.92%

**Easement Stewardship:** \$59,000

**As a % of the Easement Acquisition:** 2.26%

**How will this program accommodate the reduced appropriation recommendation from the original proposed requested amount?**

Fewer easements will be funded, acres protected and restored is reduced.

### Personnel

**Has funding for these positions been requested in the past?**

Yes



**Please explain the overlap of past and future staffing and position levels previously received and how that is coordinated over multiple years?**

This is Phase 10 of an ongoing program. These funds will pay for staff time spent on new easements associated with this phase.

## **Contracts**

**What is included in the contracts line?**

The contract line amount will be used for payments to SWCD staff for easement implementation. Estimated restoration costs are included in the easements acquisition line.

## **Easement Stewardship**

**What is the number of easements anticipated, cost per easement for stewardship, and explain how that amount is calculated?**

9 easements at \$6500 per easement. Perpetual monitoring and enforcement costs have been calculated at \$6,500 per easement. This value is based on using local SWCD staff for monitoring and landowner relations and existing enforcement authorities. The amount listed for Easement Stewardship covers costs of the SWCD regular monitoring, BWSR oversight, and any enforcement necessary.

## **Travel**

**Does the amount in the travel line include equipment/vehicle rental?**

No

**Explain the amount in the travel line outside of traditional travel costs of mileage, food, and lodging**

The travel line will only be used for traditional travel costs.

**I understand and agree that lodging, meals, and mileage must comply with the current MMB Commissioner Plan:**

Yes

## **Direct Support Services**

**How did you determine which portions of the Direct Support Services of your shared support services is direct to this program?**

BWSR calculates and periodically reviews and updates direct support services costs that are directly related to and necessary for each request based on the type of work being done.

## **Other Equipment/Tools**

**Give examples of the types of Equipment and Tools that will be purchased?**

Signs and posts as well as equipment necessary to perform field work/surveys to design and inspect wetland restorations.

## **Federal Funds**

**Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program?**

No

## Output Tables

### Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Acres
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	180	360	-	-	540
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>540</b>

### Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	\$422,900	\$211,500	-	-	\$634,400
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	\$799,500	\$1,617,100	-	-	\$2,416,600
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,222,400</b>	<b>\$1,828,600</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$3,051,000</b>

### Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	27	54	27	432	-	540
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>432</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>540</b>

### Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	\$31,700	\$63,600	\$31,700	\$507,400	-	\$634,400
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	\$120,800	\$241,500	\$120,800	\$1,933,500	-	\$2,416,600
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$152,500</b>	<b>\$305,100</b>	<b>\$152,500</b>	<b>\$2,440,900</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$3,051,000</b>

### Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	\$4,441	\$4,491	-	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-

### Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State	-	-	-	-	-

PILT Liability					
Protect in Easement	\$4,474	\$4,472	\$4,474	\$4,475	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-

## Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

## Outcomes

### Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

- Wetland and upland complexes will consist of native prairies, restored prairies, quality grasslands, and restored shallow lakes and wetlands ~ *A summary of wetland acres and associated native grasslands acquired through this appropriation will be reported. On-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years to ensure outcomes are maintained. An increase of wetland and associated grassland habitat are expected to increase the carrying capacity of wetland and grassland dependent wildlife. This has a positive impact on both game and non-game species. We expect more abundant populations of endangered, threatened, special concern and game species as complexes are restored.*

### Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

- Core areas protected with highly biologically diverse wetlands and plant communities, including native prairie, Big Woods, and oak savanna ~ *A summary of wetland acres and associated native grasslands acquired through this appropriation will be reported. On-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years to ensure outcomes are maintained. An increase of wetland and associated grassland habitat are expected to increase the carrying capacity of wetland and grassland dependent wildlife. This has a positive impact on both game and non-game species. We expect more abundant populations of endangered, threatened, special concern and game species as complexes are restored.*

### Programs in prairie region:

- Protected, restored, and enhanced shallow lakes and wetlands ~ *A summary of wetland acres and associated native grasslands acquired through this appropriation will be reported. On-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years to ensure outcomes are maintained. An increase of wetland and associated grassland habitat are expected to increase the carrying capacity of wetland and grassland dependent wildlife. This has a positive impact on both game and non-game species. We expect more abundant populations of endangered, threatened, special concern and game species as complexes are restored.*

### Programs in southeast forest region:

- Stream to bluff habitat restoration and enhancement will keep water on the land to slow runoff and degradation of aquatic habitat ~ *A summary of wetland acres and associated native grasslands acquired through this appropriation will be reported. On-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years to ensure outcomes are maintained. An increase of wetland and associated grassland habitat are expected to increase the carrying capacity of wetland and grassland dependent wildlife. This has a positive impact on both game and non-game species. We expect more abundant populations of endangered, threatened, special concern and game species as complexes are restored.*

## Parcels

*For restoration and enhancement programs ONLY: Managers may add, delete, and substitute projects on this parcel list based upon need, readiness, cost, opportunity, and/or urgency so long as the substitute parcel/project forwards the constitutional objectives of this program in the Project Scope table of this accomplishment plan. The final accomplishment plan report will include the final parcel list.*

## Parcel Information

### Sign-up Criteria?

[Yes](#)

### **Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:**

Through a combination of targeted outreach and eligibility screening followed by a scoring and ranking process, the RIM Wetlands program evaluates each application on the potential to restore wetland/upland functions and values; optimizing wildlife habitat benefits and providing other benefits including water quality. Each site is evaluated on its benefits to the surrounding landscape, ability to build upon existing corridors and complexes, and site-specific features that highlight the benefits of permanent protection and habitat.

During the application process, a review of adjacent permanent habitat and easement size is conducted to indicate a site's usefulness as a corridor or extension to an existing habitat complex. Other examples of the science-based targeting used include proximity to threatened and endangered species, contributing watershed area, proximity to DNR Protected Waters, and use of the USFWS Habitat and Population Evaluation Team's (HAPET) Wildlife Habitat Potential Model for environmental evaluation.

BWSR will continue to utilize similar science-based considerations that have been historically used by the RIM Wetlands program. The current scoring and ranking criteria for CREP wetland practices is attached as an example of the score sheet and criteria that will be used.